

The brown algae *Sargassum muticum* in the Atlantic coast of Morocco: new record in Africa and risks of its potential expansion to nearby areas

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In the winter of 2011, a new brown macroalga was identified in the shoreline of Doukkala (Casablanca – El Jadida). Later surveys along the Atlantic coast of Morocco discovered new sites inside tide pools as well as shallow subtidal populations of that conspicuous species. Comparative analysis of Herbaria material from diverse geographical regions revealed that the concerned species is the highly invasive *Sargassum muticum*, which was introduced in the European coasts in the middle '70, both Atlantic (southern coast of UK) and Mediterranean (Étang de Thau), from Japan/Korea associated with transfers of oyster spats. Since those introduction sites, the species expanded its distributional range along the European Atlantic shores and, until now, the species was present in the benthic communities from Norway to Portugal. In this contribution, preliminary phenological and ecological data of this allochthonous species are provided from the Doukkala coast. The vector of introduction towards the Moroccan coast was one more time identified as oyster spats, in this case coming from French Atlantic sites. The obtained results revealed that the highly invasive *S. muticum* is already established in the central Atlantic coast of Morocco and may spread towards nearby areas, affecting both the structure and composition of benthic populations. Guidelines for prevention of further expansion of this new marine species along the African and other coasts such as the oceanic archipelagos are considered.